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NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 23, 2003

Contact: Charles Keegan, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research, (406) 243-5113.

UM BUREAU: LUMBER PRODUCTION DECLINE ANTICIPATED

MISSOULA—

Montana's lumber production has not changed much in the past year, but it likely will decline in the third quarter of 2003, according to a researcher with The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

"Despite much higher lumber prices, third quarter production levels will almost certainly be lower because of log shortages related to this year's wildfires and court decisions impacting the national forest harvest program," said Charles Keegan, the bureau's director of forest industry research.

Lumber production in the second quarter of 2003 was 300 million board feet, up slightly from 296 million board feet during the first quarter of 2003 and 290 million board feet in the second quarter 2002.

Employment in Montana's forest products industry was 3,867 in the second quarter of 2003, up 40 workers from the first quarter of 2003. But employment was down 217 workers from the second quarter of last year because of the December closure of the Stimson plywood plant in Libby, Keegan said. Third quarter 2003 employment is expected to be down even further.

Wages were \$33 million in the second quarter of 2003, changing little from the

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previous quarter, but down 5 percent from the second quarter of 2002, he said.

These figures refer only to Montana production workers at timber processing facilities and plants processing wood fiber residue from timber processing facilities. Production workers account for about 40 percent of the workers in Montana's forest products industry. Estimates do not include the several thousand workers in logging, trucking and other related jobs.

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